

/47 cont. /

Every religious concept presupposes or includes within itself these three motivations: reverential love, supplication, and gratitude. Magic, by contrast, hides beneath its cloak these three opposites: fear or dread, imperative conjury, and selfish material interest. For this reason magic has been called a vain religion, that is, hollow, empty, with only an outward appearance, a mere hull or husk. "Magic," says Grandmaison, "is nothing but formulism, pure self-interest. Science without a basis, falsification or corruption of true religion, deals with its object without respect and without love."

104. Fundamentally, thus, religion and magic represent the eternal struggle between the spiritual and material, soul and body, sincerity and hypocrisy, formulism and realism: worship in spirit and in truth as opposed to worship in this or that exact /48/ place and with many artful words, to rend the heart as opposed to rending clothes, to offer a contrite and humble heart as opposed to offerings in the spirit of ransom and bribery, to avoid hypocrisy and not pharisaic lightness, to fear not that which kills the body but that which demoralizes the spirit, to avoid not the legally impure contact with certain things or others, nor eating with unwashed hands, but the action, the word, and even the intimate evil desire, etc., etc., according to the teaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

105. The result is that the Indians do not love but fear the disembodied spirits or orodán and mauarí, as possible agents of purely physical ills; neither do they invoke them with submission or reverence; they try to disarm or bribe them with material things, which they desire or fear the same as we do; finally, these spirits are not offended by immoral actions but by physical actions, nor do they take over the evil person, but the weak, the sick, etc.

The sorcerer does not supplicate, properly speaking, any superior being; he believes that he knows a means by which some things or natural causes work upon others or find themselves obliged to work. As a certain author states, magic is the art

/94 cont. /

580 interrogators, together with the majority of those who discuss it, understand that within the word religion are included these three things: beliefs or dogmas, morality or precepts, and worship or prayers, sacrifices, etc.

204. For a long time there circulated very validly through the lands of America the humoristic saying that the Indians did not have "Dios, ni fe, ni ley, ni rey /God, nor faith, nor law, nor king/. " This saying, in addition to being a mnemonic device for remembering the consonants which native languages are apt to lack, also included a satirical intent and meant to say that Indians in general lacked religious organization (God and faith) and social organization (King and Law).

In conversations upon this very subject more than once I have heard it said, making a clever play on words, that the Indians are godless /"los indios son los-sin-Dios/.

77/ 205. In the previous chapter we categorically rejected
929 this statement and we saw, especially, that the proof that the Indians didn't know how to answer whether or not they had any religion nor how to define or explain it is of no value in this matter, since these are theoretical questions for theorists.

To answer directly the question under study there exist two obvious and simplistic answers:

778 a) The negative one, which consists of saying: That the
● 782 Indians do not have idols or images, nor sacred places or buildings, nor offerings or sacrifices, nor persons consecrated to religion.

77/ b) The positive one, which runs on a par with the former one and is, like it, simplistic (and into which I confess to having fallen at times through a fondness for synthesis and brevity and through trying to make myself understood by those who are not very versed in these matters), which consists of saying: That /95/ Indians believe in the devil (ancient thesis) or that they are animists (modern thesis).

/95 cont./

776 a) The Pemón do not have an autochthonous idea of a God Creator and Savior of each of his creatures, nor particularly of man. I believe very apt Joubert's statement: "Seeking words, ideas are found," and from it I deduce that, since the Pemón lack any word of their own to say "God," they also lack this concept. And I do remember with no little laughter that the "pra man, there is none," with which /96/ they answered someone who was interrogating them about this, was interpreted as the equivalent of "Brahma."

771 b) Their moral code, although it is known, is not made
577 dependent upon a supreme will, nor is it thought that moral actions might have the sanction of a reward or a positive punishment, external and not inherent to the action itself either in this life or in another one, although this life is clearly admitted with regard to its existence but very confusedly regarding its form and manner.

Those who state flatly that "there neither exists dogma without morality, nor morality without dogma," should explain this anomaly. I believe simply that they ought not to exist logically; but from this it cannot be deduced that they do not exist in fact.

● 782 c) No acts of worship are known of: neither of love and adoration, nor of sacrifice and placation. Neither are images or idols seen, nor anything, in general, of what makes up the external demonstrations of respect to God and his saints.

208. And in lieu of these three essential elements, they have the following:

776 a) A belief that each one of the species of animate and inanimate beings, which exists in the world, has its progenitor or its own primogenital ancestor, endowed with specific qualities, from whom individuals derive their faculties, of whom he is the protector and avenger in a purely physical order. These are the imá, the piá, said in generic form, and the potorí and the pachí, according to whether these ancestors or genealogical trees are considered masculine or feminine.

Typical hunting magic with a

224 maraka and a song-spell appears in the legend of Maichak on another page
 [223] (the episode of the second magic implement, stolen by Maichak from an armadillo). It is reasonable to assume that this represents magic once really used by mortals, but it is merely inherited by the Kamarakotos as part of the story and is not used by them. They do employ two very curious but typically Carib
 [824] magic means of increasing proficiency in hunting. One of these is to insert a cord of twisted moriche fibers into one nostril and to pull it out through the
 [304] mouth. The other is to scarify the skin of the arms and then to rub in a crushed
 [824] plant, called kumi, which is sometimes especially grown for this purpose. Our hunters ruefully admitted that none of the Kamarakoto hunting magic is really very effective.

General Religious Ideas.

773 Most of the myths, including the several that together make up the story of Maichak as given in this report, abound in unnatural and supernatural events and beings. To this extent, as well as to the extent that they embody explanations of natural phenomena and of creation, they include ideas usually related to religion. It would, however, be misleading to suppose that they form or assume the existence of any coherent or fixed body of religious doctrine. They are simply stories, fairy tales if one wishes, in which the non-natural is taken for granted.

776 There is firm belief in the existence of spirits, mostly inimical, of whom Piama is typical and is the most important. Piama and the kanaimaton are still very much in the Indians' minds. Various other spirits are believed to exist but are seldom thought of and few of the Indians can even name any of them.

777 Such simple theology as the tribe may have possessed seems largely to have
 [178] broken down and to have been forgotten except as it has a practical bearing on their lives, which means except as it relates to illness and misfortune. Prayer,
 [222] or any form of communication with the supernatural, seems to be unknown except as already suggested for the piaches.
 [227]

In this rudimentary and probably degenerate system, misfortune is adequately explained by kanaima. Evil and sin do not appear to be considered supernatural or unnatural and there is no evident moral or ethical relationship of religion to their lives, which undoubtedly goes far to explain (or at least is correlated with) their carefree, happy, and, in a sense, sinless lives. They do not have any burden of original sin to bear. Felicity is considered a normal state for which no thanks are due to powers on high. I could not learn that they have any planting or harvest gods or ceremonies, which seems curious in an agricultural people.

775 No clear-cut statement of indigenous doctrine regarding the soul and life after death could be obtained, the usual statement being that "we don't know